

LGM

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS MAGAZINE
JULY/AUGUST 2019

SHALL NOT BE DENIED

WOMEN FIGHT
FOR THE VOTE

Plus

Band of Sisters

Putting Suffrage
on the Map

History, Carved
in Stone





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Key figures in the decades-long battle to win the ballot for women.

■ Artist George W. Maynard symbolically depicted civilization as a woman in this detail of a mural in the Library's Jefferson Building. *Carol M. Highsmith Archive / Library of Congress*

Mission of the Library of Congress

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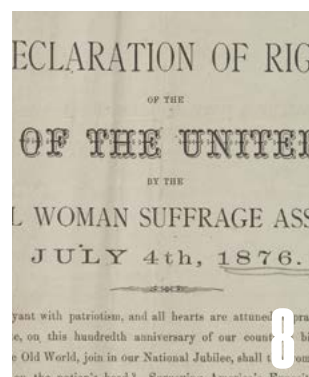
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■ On the cover: Women workers, wearing suffrage sashes and carrying suffrage banners, picket near the White House in this February 1917 photograph colorized by Sanna Dullaway for Time magazine. *Prints and Photographs Division / colorized image courtesy of Sanna Dullaway*

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LIBRARY IN HISTORY



■ Above: Sculptor Adelaide Johnson sits among her busts of important figures from the suffrage movement.

HISTORY, CARVED IN STONE

In an adventurous life, this suffragist sculptor forged her own legacy.

As the “sculptor of the suffrage movement,” Adelaide Johnson created likenesses of some of the movement’s greatest figures – and carved out her own place in history.

Johnson lived an adventurous, tumultuous life. As a young woman, she fell down an elevator shaft, suffered terrible injuries, then used the money she received as compensation to study in Europe and, eventually, open a sculpture studio in Rome. An ardent feminist, she married British businessman Alexander Jenkins at a ceremony witnessed by busts of prominent suffragists – her “bridesmaids.” Jenkins took her last name and would be known variously as Mr. Johnson and Mr. Jenkins Johnson.

Years later, broke and facing eviction, Johnson refused to sell her sculptures to pay off debts, instead inviting the press to watch her destroy the pieces in protest. Desperate, she appeared on TV quiz shows in an attempt to raise money. When Johnson died at 96, newspapers reported her age as 108 – she had, it turned out, falsified her age

on the marriage license to approximate that of her husband, 11 years her junior.

The Library holds Johnson’s papers: letters, diaries, speeches and notes that chronicle a lifetime of work – including an effort to get her busts of suffrage pioneers Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott permanently displayed in the new Library of Congress building, then nearing completion.

Johnson had produced the busts for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Three years later, Anthony wrote to Johnson, expressing hope that Congress would purchase them for installation at the Library in what’s now called the Jefferson Building.

“Those two women were the originators of the woman suffrage movement as an organized force in this country and their busts ought to stand in some of the niches in that mammoth building,” Anthony wrote, suggesting she might lobby Librarian of Congress Ainsworth Rand Spofford on the matter.

The Library eventually acquired Anthony’s and Johnson’s papers, but none of the busts came to the Library, until now. The Anthony sculpture is on loan to the “Shall Not Be Denied” exhibition for display in the Jefferson Building – some 126 years after Johnson created it.

—Mark Hartsell

FAVORITE PLACE



U.S. CAPITOL ROTUNDA

The historic rotunda (top left) of the U.S. Capitol is an ambitious, soaring structure that combines inspiring architecture and iconic artwork to remind Americans of great events and figures in their shared past.

Across the walls, paintings by Trumbull, Brumidi and others illustrate seminal scenes from U.S. history: The Pilgrims embark on the Mayflower, the Founders sign the Declaration of Independence, peace follows a terrible civil war. The dome is crowned with a depiction of George Washington ascending to heaven while, 180 feet below, statues of historic figures such as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King Jr. line the floor.

Among those great men sits a monument (bottom left) dedicated to three great women: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, pioneers of the women's suffrage movement.

The National Woman's Party presented the monument, sculpted by Adelaide Johnson from an eight-ton block of marble, to the Capitol in 1921. The Joint Committee on the Library accepted it on behalf of Congress. The sculpture originally was unveiled in the rotunda but soon after was moved, amid controversy, to the Capitol's crypt to be displayed alongside others. But, in accordance with a congressional resolution, the sculpture was moved back to the rotunda in 1997.

Johnson's great work remains on view there today, a tribute to the vision, determination and perseverance of this band of sisters.

—Mark Hartsell

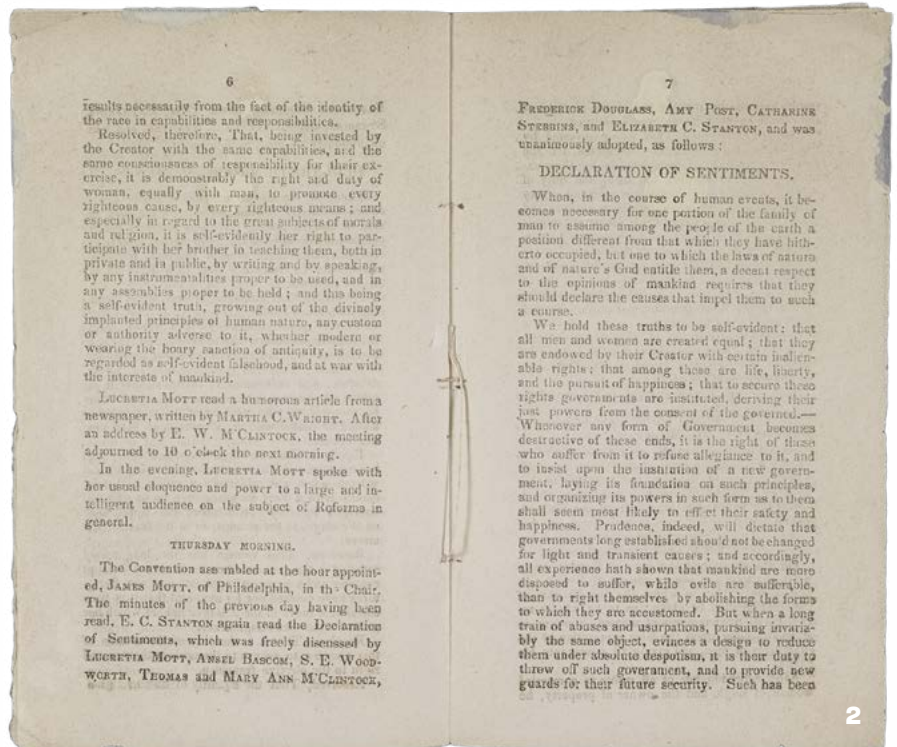
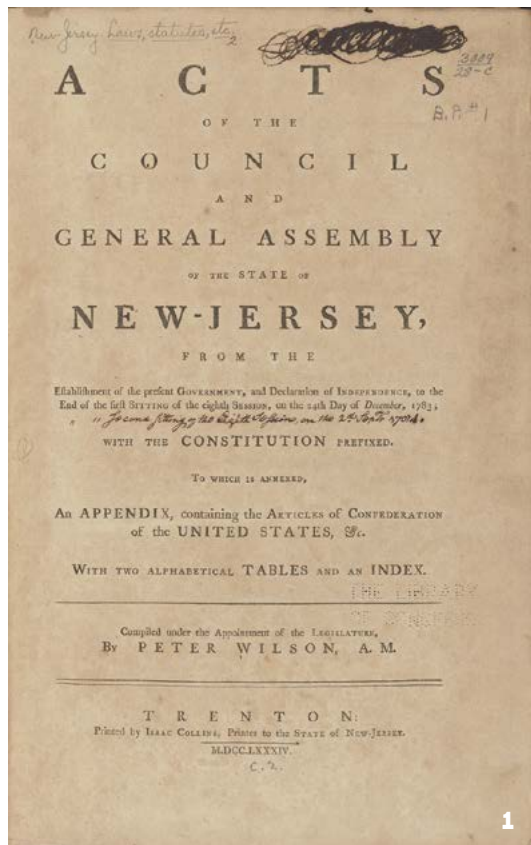
MORE INFORMATION

Capitol suffragist monument
go.usa.gov/xmDMX

CURATOR'S PICKS

SEVEN DECADES OF STRUGGLE

We choose favorite items from the Library's new exhibition, "Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote."



1. FIRST TO VOTE

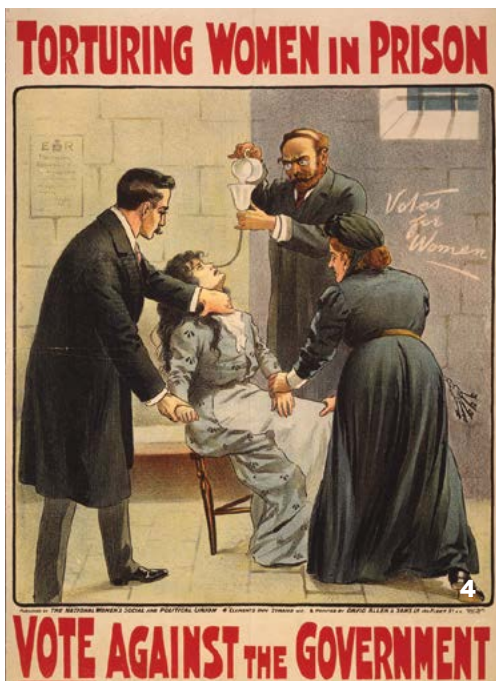
Acts of the Council and General Assembly of the State of New-Jersey, published in 1784, allowed some women in that state to vote in local and state elections. That right didn't last long, however: In 1807, a state law restricted voting to "free, white, male citizens" at least 21 years old and worth 50 pounds. *Law Library of Congress*

2. DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS

In July 1848, more than 300 people assembled in Seneca Falls, New York, for the first women's rights convention in U.S. history. At this meeting, Elizabeth Cady Stanton read her now-famous "Declaration of Sentiments" protesting women's inferior legal status. Stanton's original declaration is believed lost, but this rare printed version survives in Library collections. *Manuscript Division*

3. TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

After weeks of controversy, the first national suffrage parade took place in the District of Columbia on March 3, 1913, the day before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson. Bands, mounted brigades, floats and an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 costumed marchers assembled for a procession through a city brimming with visitors – a historic occasion captured in this illustrated souvenir program. *Manuscript Division*



4. THE STOMACH TUBE

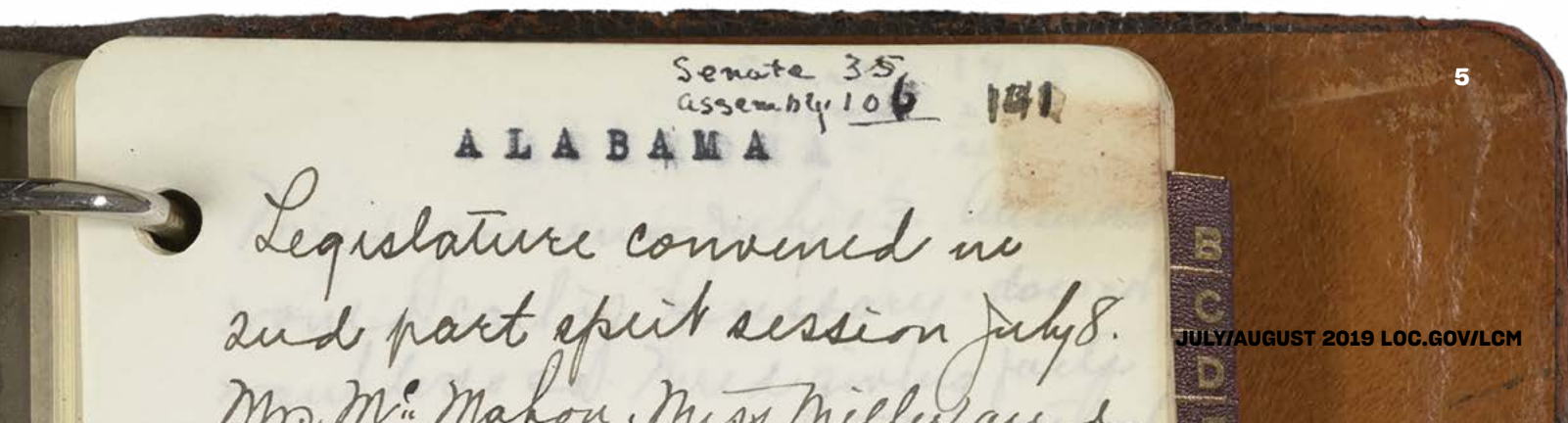
Denied political prisoner status, Alice Paul and Rose Winslow began hunger strikes in District Jail on Nov. 5, 1917, to protest their unjust imprisonment and disproportionate sentences. Prison officials responded with "forcible feeding," illustrated in this British poster, by which a solution of milk and eggs was poured into a tube forcibly inserted in the nose or throat of a restrained prisoner. *Prints and Photographs Division*

5. TRACKING RATIFICATION

In this notebook, Carrie Chapman Catt tracked the progress of ratification of the 19th Amendment by the states. In Alabama, shown here, ratification failed twice in the state Senate and once in the House, despite President Wilson's support and assurances from white suffragists that existing poll taxes and literacy tests would limit black women's votes. *Manuscript Division*

MORE INFORMATION

"Shall Not Be Denied" exhibition
go.usa.gov/xmugZ



ONLINE OFFERINGS

BAND OF SISTERS

■ The Library's suffrage-related collections include the diary of Susan B. Anthony (below) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's draft of "The Woman's Bible." Manuscript Division

The Library holds the papers of the suffrage movement's greatest figures.

Library collections thoroughly document the decades-long fight for women's suffrage: Those collections contain the records of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman's Party as well as the personal papers of some of the movement's greatest figures.

The Library has placed online the papers of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt and Mary Church Terrell – letters, diaries, writings, clippings and scrapbooks that shed light on the cause and the women behind it.

Those papers contain a report on the historic 1848 convention for women's rights in Seneca Falls; drafts of Terrell's autobiography, "A Colored Woman in a White World"; and Stanton's draft of her controversial "The Woman's Bible." Anthony's diaries reveal her thoughts on historic events, such as Abraham Lincoln's assassination, and track the mundane transactions of everyday life: \$5 for stamps here, \$1.50 for telegrams there.

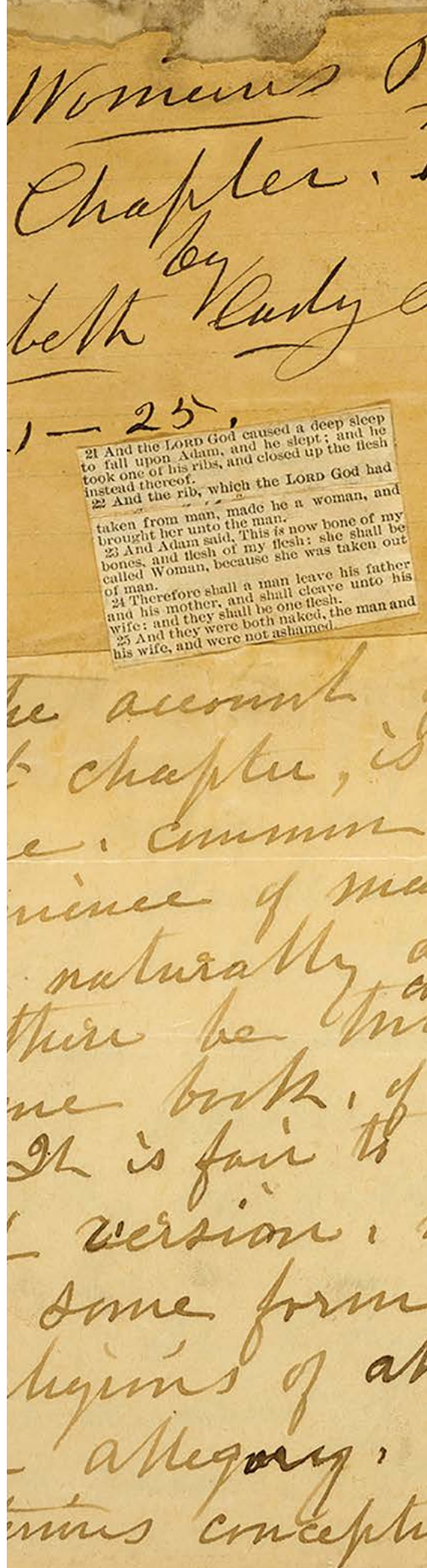
The papers also capture the frustrations of working for decades for a goal that, at times, must have seemed unattainable. "Could we resurrect from the archives of this Capitol all the petitions and speeches presented here by women for human freedom during this century, they would reach above this Dome," Stanton told the Judiciary Committee in 1896.

More than a decade after Stanton's death, women finally got the right to vote, and the collections record the joy of so many who had worked for it so long. In early 1920, with final victory only months away, Catt addressed supporters in Chicago.

"There will never come another day like this," she said. "Let the joy be unconfined and let it speak so clearly that its echo will be heard around the world."

MORE INFORMATION

Digital collections
[loc.gov/collections](https://www.loc.gov/collections)



Janice E. Ruth oversees one of the world's great repositories of historical personal papers.

Describe your work at the Library.

I have the great privilege of serving as assistant chief (currently acting chief) of the Manuscript Division, one of the largest repositories of personal papers and organizational records in the country. The division's holdings, estimated at 68 million items, document all aspects of American history and culture and include some of the nation's most treasured manuscripts, including, for example, presidential papers, the records of the NAACP and the papers of numerous Supreme Court justices.

I oversee our efforts to acquire, arrange, describe, preserve, secure, digitize, promote and make available for research and exhibition use these unique resources. Though often absorbed with writing reports and handling myriad personnel, budget and facilities responsibilities, I am fortunate that I am never far removed from our amazing collections and the researchers who use them.

How did you prepare for your position?

I joined the Library a few months after graduating from college. Previous part-time jobs at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, the Maryland State Archives and the Maryland Historical Society helped me land a position as an archives technician in the Manuscript Division's Preparation Section. Though only a temporary job, it got me in the door and before it ended 20 months later, I latched onto an accessioning position in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, where I had previously been detailed to prepare collections for the Library's optical disk project.

While there, I applied to the HILS graduate program at the University of Maryland, and before classes began, I had rejoined the Manuscript Division as a reference librarian, working full-time the next five years while earning my master's in history and master's in library science degrees part time. The reference librarian job led to subsequent positions, first as the division's writer-editor and later as the division's specialist in American women's history. These progressively responsible positions in each



of the Manuscript Division's three sections, along with a one-year detail to the American Folklife Center to help establish the Veterans History Project, prepared me well for the responsibilities of my current job.

What experiences have been the most memorable?

That's a hard question – there have been so many. I was part of the national committee that developed the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) standard for finding aids. That group was great fun. It also has been gratifying to see EAD's impact on the discovery of archival collections everywhere. Helping launch the Veterans History Project was equally rewarding, as have been the many American Memory and Project One digitization projects that followed that first optical disk effort.

In terms of both my appreciation for the subject content and the lasting friendships I formed, being part of the teams that produced the American Women guide, organized the Resourceful Women symposium, wrote the "Women Who Dare" books and launched the women's history discussion group also rank among my most memorable experiences.

What are your favorite women's history collection items?

There are far too many to name! I will say that a number of my all-time favorites have made it into the Library's new exhibition, "Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote," on which I have greatly enjoyed working with exhibition director Carroll Johnson-Welsh.

NO FAVORS, JUST JUSTICE

■ Right: Suffragists interrupted a celebration of the Declaration of Independence's centennial to pass out copies of their own Declaration of Rights (opposite). *Prints and Photographs Division, Manuscript Division*

Suffragists crashed the 1876 centennial celebration to assert their own rights.

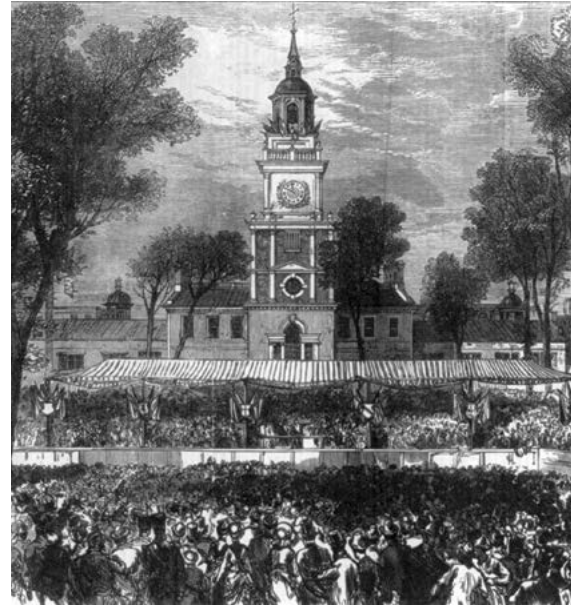
The Centennial International Exhibition, the first world's fair ever held in the United States, showcased the energy, ambition and creativity of a young nation.

Over six months in 1876, millions flocked to Philadelphia for the exhibition, which displayed, among other things, the just-completed arm and torch of the Statue of Liberty, recent inventions such as the telephone and new consumer products such as Heinz ketchup and Hires root beer.

The exhibition had another purpose, as well: To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. That July 4, organizers staged a special program in Independence Square, presided over by Sen. Thomas W. Ferry and attended by dignitaries from around the world. A group of suffragists, denied a spot in the program, nevertheless determined to make a declaration of their own.

Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Sara Andrews Spencer, Lillie Devereux Blake and Phoebe W. Couzins planned to interrupt the ceremony and present Ferry with their Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States, a document they drafted as a demand for equal rights and the right to vote.

With the program underway, the group made its way toward the platform, unsure of how their approach might be met. The foreign



guests, military officers and civil officials stationed in front of the speaker's stand made way and Anthony, after offering some fitting words, presented the declaration to Ferry.

"Mr. Ferry's face paled, as bowing low, with no word, he received the declaration, which thus became part of the day's proceedings," the "History of Woman Suffrage" recorded. "The ladies turned, scattering printed copies, as they deliberately walked down the platform."

The group made its way to a platform outside of Independence Hall, where Anthony, to applause, read the declaration aloud to a crowd. "We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation," the declaration concludes. "We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever."

—Mark Hartsell

DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF THE WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES

BY THE
NATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION,
JULY 4th, 1876.

WHILE the Nation is buoyant with patriotism, and all hearts are attuned to praise, it is with sorrow we come to strike the one discordant note, on this hundredth anniversary of our country's birth. When subjects of Kings, Emperors, and Czars, from the Old World, join in our National Jubilee, shall the women of the Republic refuse to lay their hands with benedictions on the nation's head? Surveying America's Exposition, surpassing in magnificence those of London, Paris, and Vienna, shall we not rejoice at the success of the youngest rival among the nations of the earth? May not our hearts, in unison with all, swell with pride at our great achievements as a people; our free speech, free press, free schools, free church, and the rapid progress we have made in material wealth, trade, commerce, and the inventive arts? And we do rejoice, in the success thus far, of our experiment of self-government. Our faith is firm and unwavering in the broad principles of human rights, proclaimed in 1776, not only as abstract truths, but as the corner stones of a republic. Yet, we cannot forget, even in this glad hour, that while all men of every race, and clime, and condition, have been invested with the full rights of citizenship, under our hospitable flag, all women still suffer the degradation of disfranchisement.

The history of our country the past hundred years, has been a series of assumptions and usurpations of power over woman, in direct opposition to the principles of just government, acknowledged by the United States at its foundation, which are:

First. The natural rights of each individual.

Second. The exact equality of these rights.

Third. That these rights, when not delegated by the individual, are retained by the individual.

Fourth. That no person can exercise the rights of others without delegated authority.

Fifth. That the non-use of these rights does not destroy them.

And for the violation of these fundamental principles of our Government, we arraign our rulers on this 4th day of July, 1876,—and these are our

ARTICLES OF IMPEACHMENT.

BILLS OF ATTAINDER have been passed by the introduction of the word "male" into all the State constitutions, denying to woman the right of suffrage, and thereby making sex a crime—an exercise of power clearly forbidden in Article 1st, Sections 9th and 10th of the United States Constitution.

EXTREMES



A TIDE ROLLING EAST

Early successes in Western states helped women across the nation gain voting rights.

The suffrage movement's first big successes took place out West, far removed from the halls of Congress and the organizing efforts carried out in Eastern cities and towns.

In places such as Utah, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming, small territorial legislatures, the statehood process and state constitutional conventions operated with a spirit of political experimentalism that activists used to win the right to vote. Wyoming's territorial legislature enfranchised women in 1869, supported by politicians who wished to raise the territory's profile and encourage women settlers.

Women gained voting rights in Utah Territory in 1870, only for Congress to disenfranchise them 17 years later in an attempt to discourage the practice of polygamy. After the church disavowed the custom in 1890 and Utah became a state in 1896, they finally regained the vote. Suffragists won victories by referendums in Colorado (1893) and Idaho (1896) after the People's Party, a

populist third party that represented the economic interests of farmers, assumed power.

There were setbacks, to be sure: Referendums initially failed in Washington, South Dakota and California. But progressive politics eventually led to victories, and by 1915 women had full voting rights in 11 Western states – victories that fueled momentum toward a federal amendment.

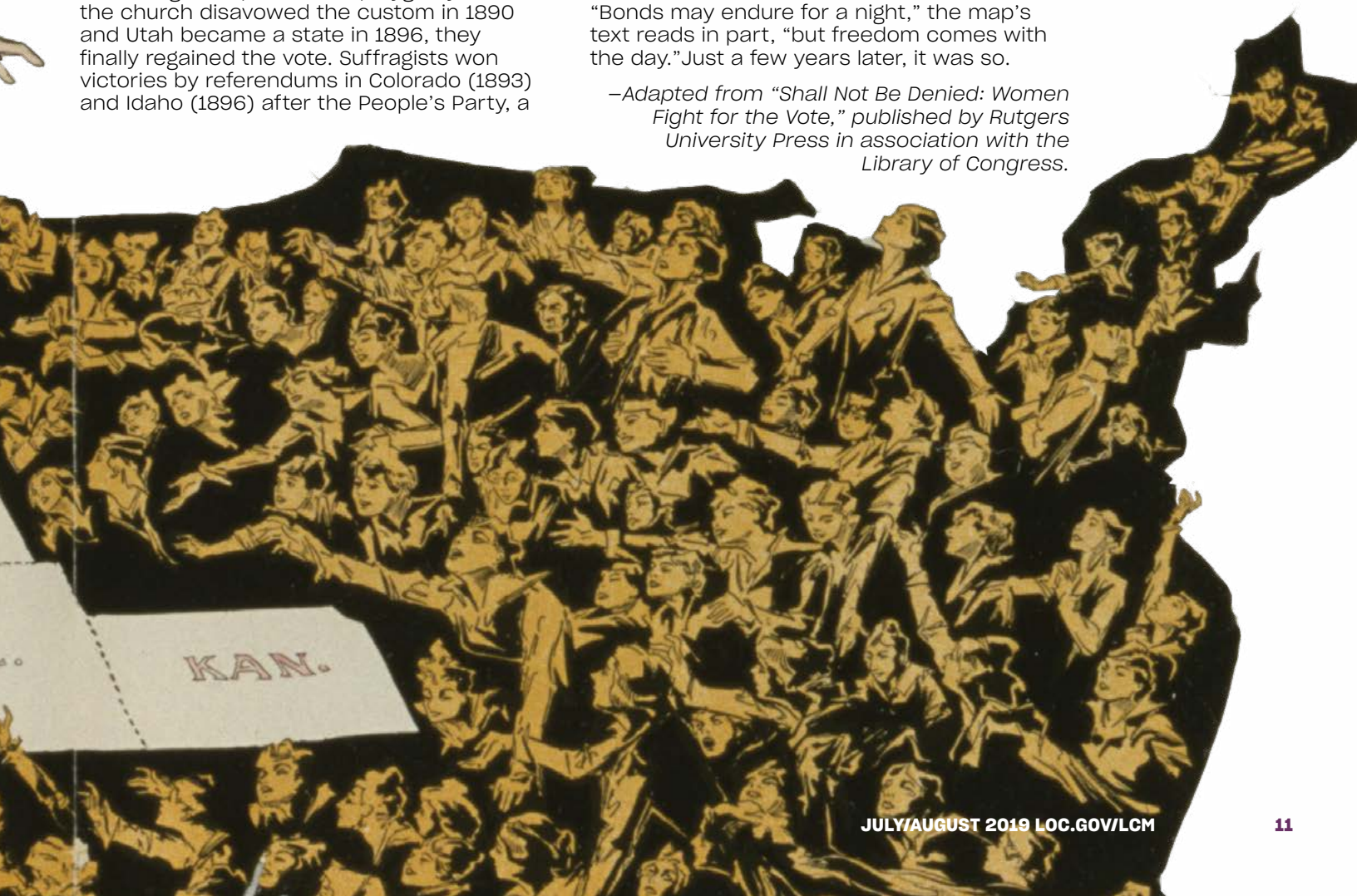
"It is to the strong, courageous, and progressive men of the Western States that the women of this whole country are looking for deliverance," author, journalist and suffragist Ida Husted Harper wrote in the *Women's Tribune* in 1905. "It is these men who must start this movement and give it such momentum that it will roll irresistibly on to the very shores of the Atlantic Ocean."

Henry Mayer illustrated that hopeful idea in a 1915 issue of *Puck* magazine with "The Awakening," which depicted a torch-bearing figure striding from the Western states across the map to the darkened void of the East, filled with women, arms reaching out, clamoring for their right to vote.

"Bonds may endure for a night," the map's text reads in part, "but freedom comes with the day." Just a few years later, it was so.

—Adapted from *"Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote,"* published by Rutgers University Press in association with the Library of Congress.

■ Henry Mayer depicted the hopeful idea of women's suffrage spreading eastward across the country in this illustration for *Puck* magazine in 1915. *Prints and Photographs Division*





CAPITOL WOMEN

■ The 116th Congress included a record number of women as members, dozens of whom posed together in white before the 2019 State of the Union address. *Eric Connolly / official House photographer*

The suffrage movement opened the voting booth to millions of women and, in the following decades, fundamentally changed Capitol Hill.

BY NEELY TUCKER

House of Representatives U. S.
Washington, D. C.

CONFIDENTIAL

December 8, 1918.

The President,
The White House.

My dear Mr. President:

I wish to express to you in this last hour the earnest hope that you will help the women of this country realize that measure of democracy which it is in the power of the Congress of the United States to grant them on Thursday.

Many doubting Members will ask your judgment on the question of federal suffrage within the next forty-eight hours; and a word from you will go far toward helping them to understand that sort of democracy which all your utterances have led American women to believe you cherish.

I do not expect an acknowledgment of this note; but I wish you to know what faith is reposed in you, and how earnestly twenty million women are waiting for political freedom.

Sincerely,

Jeannette Rankin



60313

■ Republican Rep. Jeannette Rankin of Montana wrote to President Woodrow Wilson, imploring him to support women's suffrage. Prints and Photographs Division, Manuscript Division

Montana's Jeannette Rankin came to Capitol Hill as the first woman elected to Congress in the spring of 1917. She was 36, single, a trailblazing suffragist and lobbyist. Nearly 7,000 representatives had served in the House's 128 years, all of them men. When she was sworn in on April 2, she got an enthusiastic round of applause from the gentlemen in the chamber, but she soon found Congress to be not particularly honest and beset by troublesome reporters.

"No doubt you have read in the papers about my 'red hair' and 'sending the fathers to war' and other inventions of the eastern press," she wrote in a letter to constituents on June 1, 1917. "I wish you were here to see Congress working and to know the true facts."

Some 102 years later, congressional complaints about D.C. dishonesty and problematic reporters remain pretty much the same.

Otherwise, a century after the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote nationally and altered American society, the political descendants of Rankin and other suffragists operate in a landscape their forebears could not have envisioned. The essential push of the suffrage movement was toward democracy, of opening the voting booth to millions of Americans, and that increased access to the ballot, over time, has fundamentally changed Capitol Hill.

A record number of women were sworn in as members of the 116th Congress – 102 in the House, 25 in the Senate. Nancy Pelosi resides as the speaker of the House. A woman won the popular vote for president in the 2016 election. Four female senators and one representative have so far announced they are running for the Oval Office in 2020.

Many of the incoming class wore white to their swearing-in ceremony, in homage to the suffragists who wore the color, often head to toe, to symbolize their purity and virtue. But the national suffrage organizations were led almost entirely by white Christian women (racism was a consistent problem for the movement). Today, the women in Congress are as diverse as the nation they represent: staunchly conservative, fiercely liberal, moderates, black, brown, straight, lesbian, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Native American and so on. In 1989, when the youngest



■ Wearing white, women members of Congress gather on the House floor for the State of the Union address. Phi Nguyen / official House photographer

member, 29-year-old Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, was born in the Bronx, the oldest member, 86-year-old Dianne Feinstein, had already served as mayor of San Francisco, 3,000 miles away, for a decade.

Still, these women compose just 25 percent of the House and Senate – half of their percentage in the population. And of the 365 women who have served in Congress, 131 are current members, showing how recently the path to power has been developed.

“Not until the 1990s were there enough women so that they could drive a legislative agenda,” says Matt Wasniewski, historian of the House of Representatives and editor of “Women in Congress 1917-2006.” “About four-fifths of all women who have served in Congress were elected after 1970.”

Why that matters in such a fundamental way became apparent in a series of oral histories Wasniewski and his staff conducted with former female legislators and staffers. To a woman, they all recalled the frustrations of being the only woman at one committee meeting or another. “Having a seat at the table mattered because, as so many of our

interviewees pointed out, women brought their perspectives that in many cases the men had never even considered,” Wasniewski says.

The fight to get women the vote – the longest reform movement in American history – is chronicled in “Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote,” a yearlong exhibition by the Library (along with a companion book published by the Library in association with Rutgers University Press) that opened June 4, the 100th anniversary of Senate passage of the 19th Amendment. The exhibit and book draw heavily on the Library’s records from icons such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt, the National Woman’s Party and the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

The suffragists, it has to be recalled, were not just battling for a ballot; they were also taking on deeply entrenched views of religion, social order and human genetics.

“First and foremost, what you see in the objections to suffrage is that it wasn’t God’s will,” says Aimee Hess, managing editor of



the Library's Publishing Office and an editor of "Shall Not Be Denied." "Motherhood was to be a woman's most important duty, and that was wrapped up in traditional and often religious ideals."

When Rankin arrived in 1917, there was no concept of women holding serious political power, particularly on a national level. Nearly a dozen states allowed women to vote (including Montana), but the 19th Amendment wasn't certified until 1920, when Rankin was already out of office.

She was such a novelty that, when she was elected, the Journal Gazette of Fort Wayne, Indiana, described her as "a grey-eyed, slender girl with the enthusiasm of a zealot, the simplicity of a child and the energy and fire of a race horse." Reporters tracked her every movement. She got endorsement deals, a column in a prominent paper in Chicago and a \$500-per-gig speaking fee. The limelight, she later recalled, was "a great shock."

But the handful of women elected to Congress over the next three decades mostly downplayed their gender and

eschewed symbolic leadership. Alice Mary Robertson, a stern missionary from Oklahoma, was the second woman elected to Congress, in 1921. She didn't care for the suffrage movement or most of the women in it. "I came here to Congress to represent my district," she said, "not women."

That turned out to be a common refrain, as newly elected women in the 1920s and 1930s did not present a united front on legislative issues or interests. In 1940, Margaret Chase Smith won a special election to complete her late husband's term in the House. She served four terms there and then won a Senate seat in 1948, becoming the first woman to serve in both. She stayed in office until 1973.

By then, a groundswell of female politicians in local and state offices began campaigning for federal elections, building their numbers on Capitol Hill. The 1990s showed unparalleled gains for women in Congress, laying the groundwork for today's legislature.

Neely Tucker is a writer-editor in the Office of Communications.

SHALL



NOT

Separated by decades
but joined by a common
cause, women fought
for their right to vote.

BY HANNAH FREECE

■ Suffragists
demonstrate against
President Woodrow
Wilson on the streets
of Chicago in 1916.
Manuscript Division



■ Suffrage pioneers Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton; the envelope that contained the report of the first women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls in 1848; and a sash promoting voting rights for women. *Manuscript Division*

RATIFIED IN 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrined in law that the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” The controversial campaign for women’s suffrage had lasted more than seven decades, fueled by the labor and sacrifice of thousands of individuals. Sharing a cause, but often divided over tactics, women fought for their right to vote, ultimately prevailing over prejudice, indifference and outright antagonism. Here are a few of their stories:

In 1846, two years before the famous meeting in Seneca Falls, a group of six women in Jefferson County, New York, petitioned the state’s constitutional convention, arguing that by denying women the vote the legislature had “widely departed from the true democratic principles upon which all just governments must be based.” Unlike Seneca Falls organizers Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, the petition’s signers – Eleanor Vincent, Lydia A. Williams, Lydia Osborn, Susan Ormsby, Amy Ormsby and Anna Bishop – are little known today. Historian Lori D. Ginzberg calls them “virtually invisible and impressively resistant to efforts to uncover their stories.”

As the 19th century progressed, the fight for women’s suffrage emerged as a national movement: Local gatherings grew into conventions, and speakers successful on the abolition circuit added women’s rights to their repertoires. Former slave Sojourner Truth spoke powerfully on both causes, drawing on the authority of her own experience. A contemporary account of Truth’s speech at the Ohio Woman’s Rights Convention in 1851 recorded her declaration: “I am a woman’s rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped

and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?”

After the Civil War, reformers divided over whether to eliminate race- or gender-based voting restrictions first. Addressing the American Equal Rights Association in 1866, African American poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper cautioned, “I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dewdrops just exhaled from the skies. I think that like men they may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad and the indifferent.” Harper described her experiences of discrimination, demanding that white suffragists acknowledge the harmful effects of racism.

Though many suffragists traced their roots as activists to the abolition movement, some white leaders relied on racist stereotypes to make their case for women’s votes – particularly after the introduction of the 15th Amendment, which enfranchised African American men. In 1869, Stanton used racist language to argue for “educated suffrage” rather than universal male voting rights, declaring, “Think of Patrick and Sambo and Hans and Yung Tung, who do not know the difference between a monarchy and republic ... making laws for Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott or Fanny Kemble.” The split over whether to support the 15th Amendment divided the suffrage movement for two decades.

SUFFRAGISTS AND ‘SALOON WRECKERS’

Abolition was not the only social movement to share adherents with those of women’s suffrage. The temperance movement to ban alcohol had many women leaders, who viewed the cause as a moral one appropriate for feminine influence. Women and children disproportionately suffered the

DECADES OF STRUGGLE

1848

The first women’s rights convention in the United States is held in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19 and 20. Many participants sign a “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” that outlines the goals for the emerging women’s movement.

1851

Former slave Sojourner Truth delivers her “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech before an audience at a women’s rights convention in Akron, Ohio.

1866

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony form the American Equal Rights Association, an organization for white and black women and men dedicated to universal suffrage.

1868

The 14th Amendment is ratified, extending to all citizens constitutional protections against unjust state laws. However, the amendment’s second section for the first time introduced the word “male” into the Constitution.

1869

The suffrage movement splinters over the 14th and 15th amendments. Stanton and Anthony form the more radical National Woman Suffrage Association. Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell and Julia Ward Howe organize the more conservative American Woman Suffrage Association.



VOTES FOR WOMEN

1869

The Wyoming Territory grants women the right to vote.

1870

The 15th Amendment enfranchises black men. The National Woman Suffrage Association refuses to work for its ratification, arguing that it be scrapped in favor of an amendment providing universal suffrage.

1870-75

Several women, including Virginia Louisa Minor and Susan B. Anthony, attempt to use the 14th Amendment in the courts to secure the vote. They are unsuccessful.

1874

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union is founded by Annie Wittenmyer and becomes an important force in the fight for suffrage.

1878

A women's suffrage amendment is introduced in Congress. The amendment – with its wording unchanged – finally passes both houses in 1919.



■ Above: Picketers stand watch outside the White House in 1917. Left: “Saloon wrecker” Carrie Nation. Prints and Photographs Division

consequences when drunken husbands and fathers were violent or lost their jobs and income. One such wife, the “saloon-wrecker” Carrie Nation, made her name smashing Kansas bars with her signature hatchet, frequently landing in jail and redrawing the boundaries of women’s behavior in the public sphere. Frances Willard was a more genteel figure, but no less effective: As president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, she adopted suffrage as part of the organization’s platform, extending the cause to the union’s membership of nearly half a million, which, in 1900, was 50 times larger than that of the leading national suffrage organization.

At the turn of the 20th century, the suffrage movement desperately needed new strategies.

From 1896 until 1910, no new states extended women the right to vote. Returning to New York after two decades in England, where “suffragettes” employed aggressively confrontational tactics, Harriot Stanton Blatch (Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s daughter) found that the American campaign “bored its adherents and repelled its opponents.” Blatch began organizing large public marches in New York: A parade in 1912 drew 12,000 women, a number that nearly doubled three years later. As in England, the spectacle of elegant women walking the streets, banners held aloft, generated press like nothing the movement had seen in decades. As one participant put it, “Women are no longer to be considered little tootsey wootseys who have nothing to do but look pretty. ... They are determined to take an active part in the community and look pretty too.”

Blatch sought to engage working class women in the campaign, moving away from the image of her mother’s generation of elite

1890

The National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association reunite as the National American Woman Suffrage Association under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

1890

Wyoming is admitted to the Union, becoming the first state to grant women full enfranchisement.

1896

Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Margaret Murray Washington, Fanny Jackson Coppin, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Charlotte Forten Grimké and Harriet Tubman form the National Association of Colored Women.

1900

Passing the suffrage torch to a new generation, Susan B. Anthony steps down as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and chooses Carrie Chapman Catt to succeed her.

1911

The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage is organized. These “antis” draw support from urban political machines, Southern congressmen and corporate capitalists.

■ Clockwise from top: Suffrage organizer Margaret Foley addresses a crowd; Lucy Burns at the Occoquan workhouse; and National Association of Colored Women co-founder Harriet Tubman. Prints and Photographs Division

matrons and objecting to what she called “those little anti-republican things I hear so often here in America, this talk of the quality of votes.” Margaret Foley, a milliner in Boston, found her calling as a labor and suffrage organizer. A member of the Hat Trimmers’ Union, the Women’s Trade Union League and the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, Foley embarked on speaking tours and became known for heckling politicians, another tactic borrowed from the British. In 1910, Foley rained down suffrage literature from a hot air balloon over Lawrence, Massachusetts. “She can easily manage seven feet, turn her brown hair to flame, descend like a mountain of bricks and extend her mellifluous accent to megaphonics,” the Boston Transcript wrote of Foley.

‘JAILED, TERRORIZED, SUPPRESSED’

If Foley’s antics grabbed attention, they paled in comparison to the undertakings of Alice Paul’s National Woman’s Party, which in 1917 began daily pickets outside the White House. Paul, who had been jailed and force-fed while protesting for suffrage in England, initiated the pickets as a sustained, peaceful demonstration to hold President Woodrow Wilson accountable for the lack of action on a federal suffrage amendment. These activities dismayed the more conservative National American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Carrie Chapman Catt, who preferred nonpartisan lobbying to shock tactics.

When police arrested picketers for “obstructing traffic” and incarcerated them,



Paul and others undertook hunger strikes. Paul was force-fed a mixture of milk and eggs three times a day until her release, when she announced: “We are put out of jail as we were put into jail, at the whim of the Government. They tried to terrorize and suppress us. They could not, and so freed us.”

Thanks to careful lobbying, Wilson’s eventual endorsement and increasingly sympathetic public opinion, the 19th Amendment was

1913

Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organize the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, later known as the National Woman’s Party.

1913

Thousands of suffragists march in Washington, D.C., on March 3, the day before President Wilson’s inauguration.

1916

Jeannette Rankin of Montana becomes the first woman elected to Congress.

1917

Picketing of the White House begins in January and carries on over the course of the year, resulting in the arrests and imprisonments of many protesters.

1918

After years of resistance, President Woodrow Wilson in January publicly declares his support for a federal suffrage amendment for women.



■ Bottom: Civil rights and suffrage activist Mary Church Terrell. Top: Cartoons such as this one by W.S. Warren urged women to exercise their newly won right to vote. Prints and Photographs Division, Manuscript Division

shepherded through Congress and ratified by 36 states by August 1920. But for many, the battle was not over.

Two months later, African American educator Mary Church Terrell was threatened with arrest at a train station for “disorderly conduct” after she inquired about a black organizer for the Republican Party. Terrell asserted in a letter to the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “I consider myself the first woman victim after the Ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment north of the Mason & Dixon Line. ... The colored women of the South will be shamefully treated, and will not be allowed to vote, I am sure. ... We are so helpless without the right of citizenship in that section of the country where we need it most.”

Though Terrell had been active in the suffrage movement for three decades, she and other African Americans continued to face barriers to voting throughout the South until the civil rights movement successfully pressed for reforms in the 1960s.

The history of the fight for women’s voting rights in the United States is one of conflict, compromise and sacrifice. Activists who challenged restrictive social mores transformed the American political landscape, and individuals who fight for equal rights today carry on their legacy, heeding Terrell’s cry in 1920: “If we do not use the franchise we shall give our enemies a stick with which to break our heads, and we shall not be able to live down the reproach of our indifference for one hundred years. I am sure you are eager to discharge the duties and obligations of citizenship. Hold meetings! Every time you meet a woman, talk to her about going to the polls to vote.”

HANNAH FREECE IS THE CO-EDITOR OF “SHALL NOT BE DENIED: WOMEN FIGHT FOR THE VOTE.” SHE IS AN EDITORIAL ASSISTANT IN THE PUBLISHING OFFICE.

1919

The 19th Amendment passes both the House and Senate and goes to the states for ratification.

1920

Its victory accomplished, National American Woman Suffrage Association ceases to exist.

1920

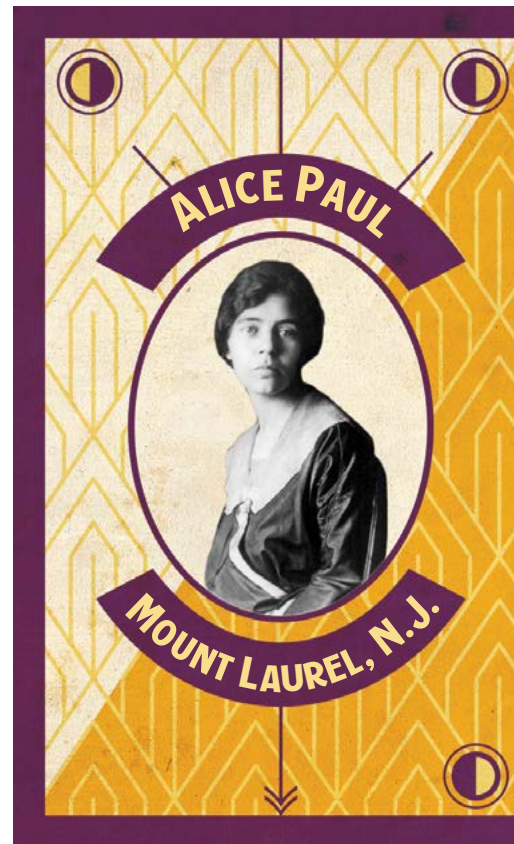
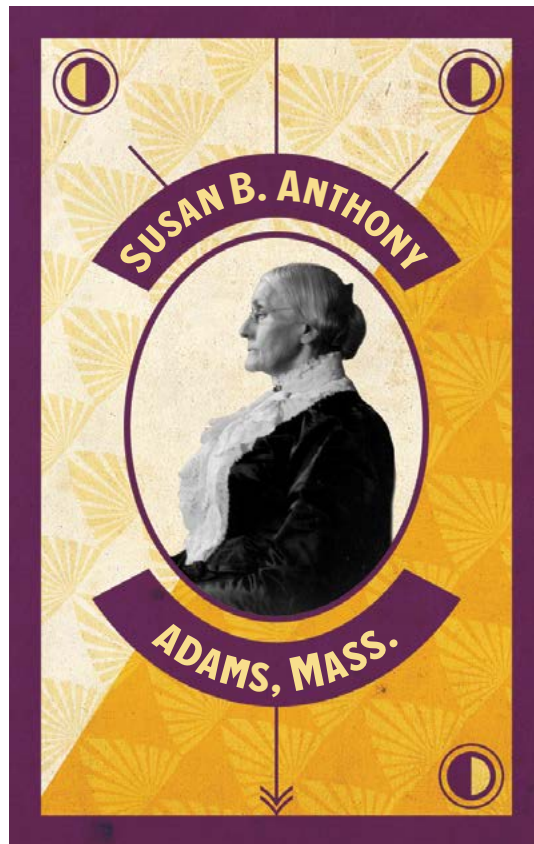
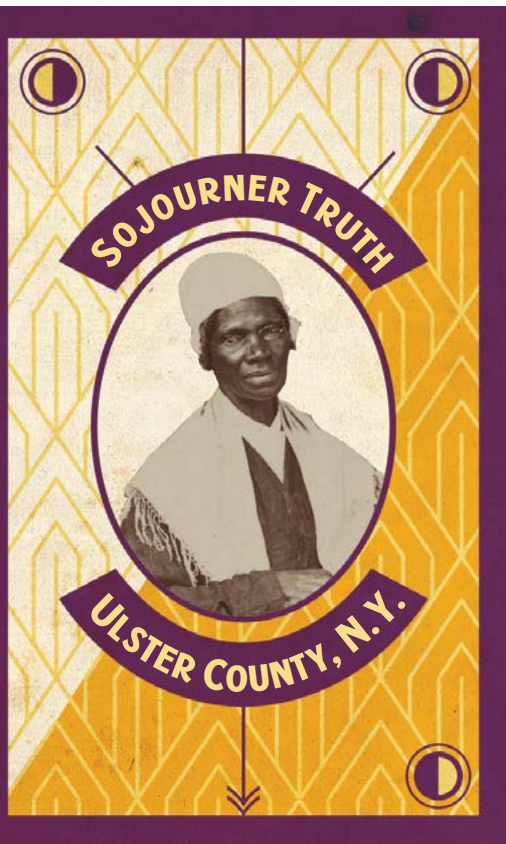
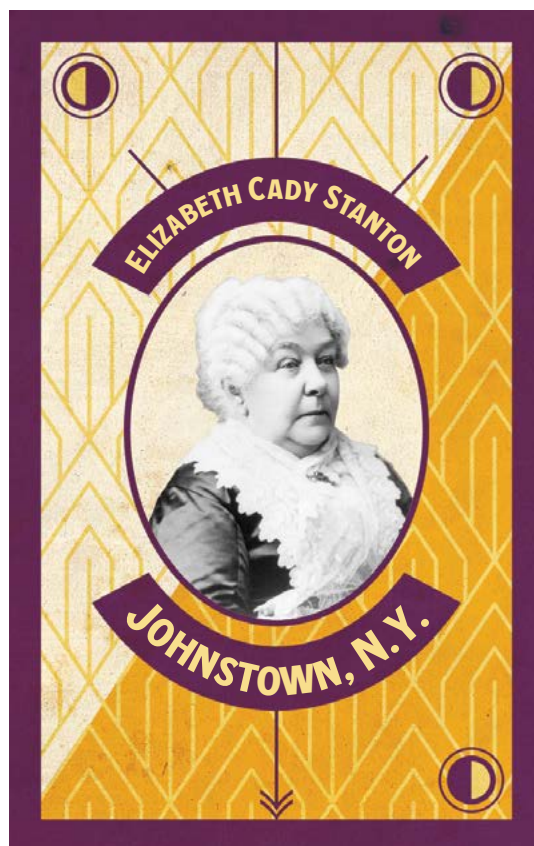
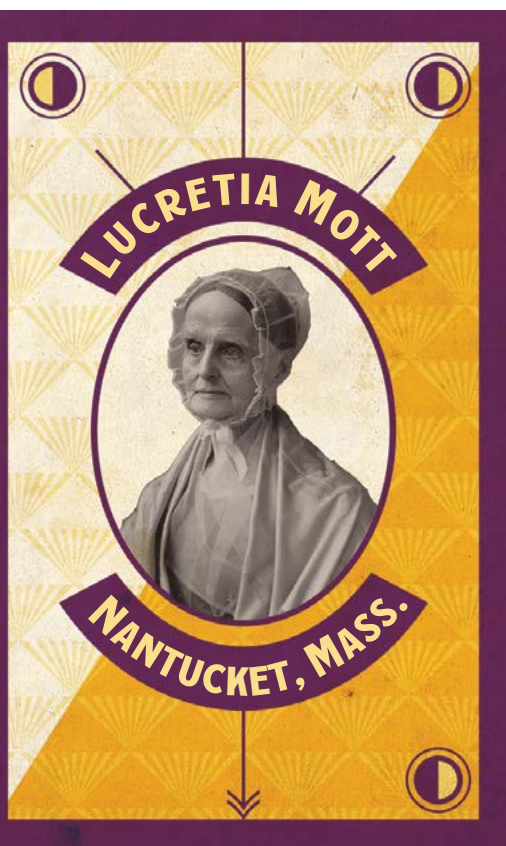
The League of Women Voters is founded as a “mighty political experiment” designed to help women carry out their new responsibilities as voters.

1920

Following ratification by the necessary 36 states, the 19th Amendment is adopted on Aug. 26.

1920

Women across the entire United States are allowed to vote for the first time, casting ballots in the Nov. 2 presidential election.



WOMEN OF SUFFRAGE

SEPT. 23, 1838 — JUNE 9, 1927

Charismatic activist Victoria Woodhull championed women's suffrage as well as such unconventional causes as free love and mystical socialism. In 1870, millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt set up Woodhull with her own stock brokerage. She became quite successful and used her profits to publish a women's rights magazine. Woodhull gave ardent speeches on suffrage and, in 1872, ran for U.S. president as a member of the Equal Rights Party — the first woman to run for the nation's highest office.

Nov. 12, 1815 — Oct. 26, 1902

With Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the 1848 Seneca Falls convention and authored the "Declaration of Sentiments," which called for equal rights for women. Her later, long-term collaboration with Susan B. Anthony dominated the suffrage movement for decades. In 1869, they founded the National Woman Suffrage Association, and Stanton was named its first president. She later was elected president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, a position she held until 1892.

JAN. 3, 1793 — Nov. 11, 1880

Early feminist Lucretia Mott helped organize the seminal Seneca Falls convention in 1848 to "discuss the social, civil, and religious rights of women" — a gathering that fueled the emerging women's suffrage movement. From there, Mott devoted most of her time to the causes of suffrage and abolition, writing articles and giving powerful speeches. In 1866, she was elected the first president of the American Equal Rights Association, an organization dedicated to promoting universal suffrage.

JAN. 11, 1885 — JULY 9, 1977

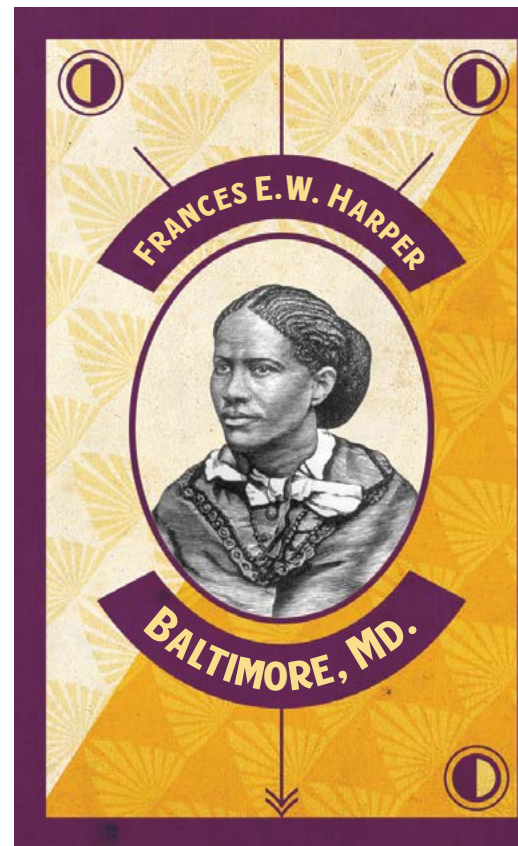
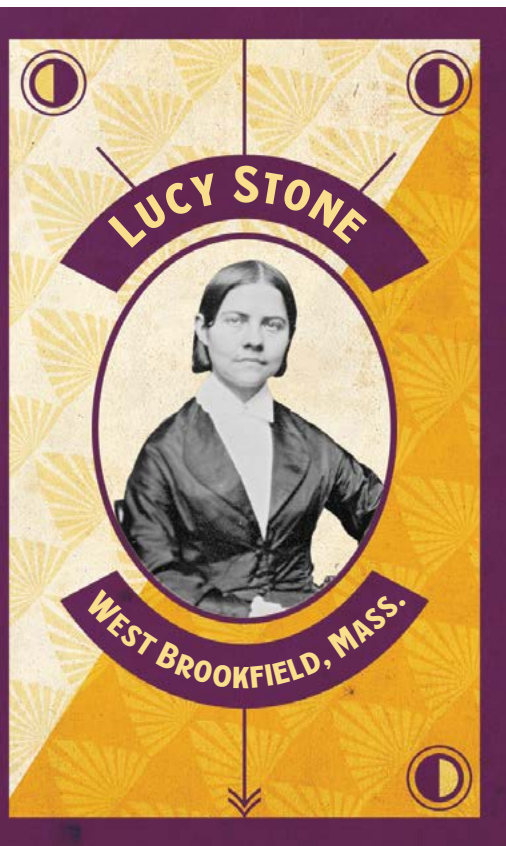
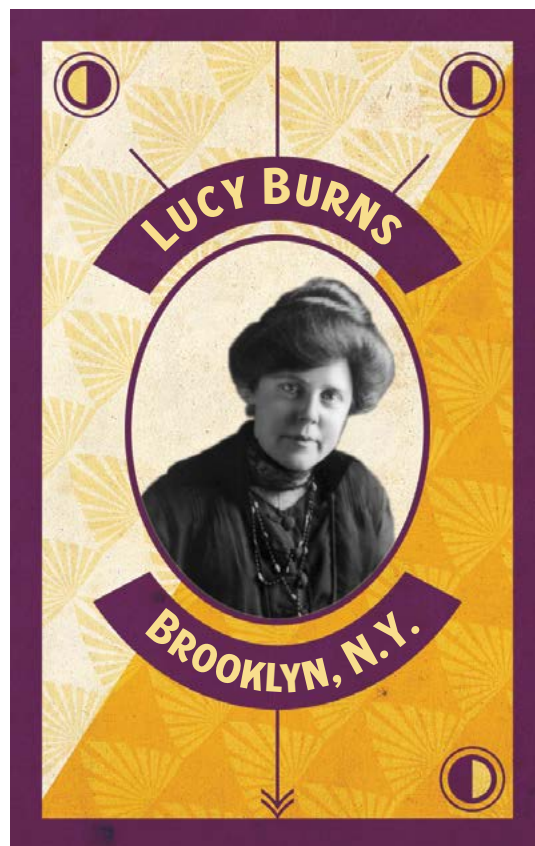
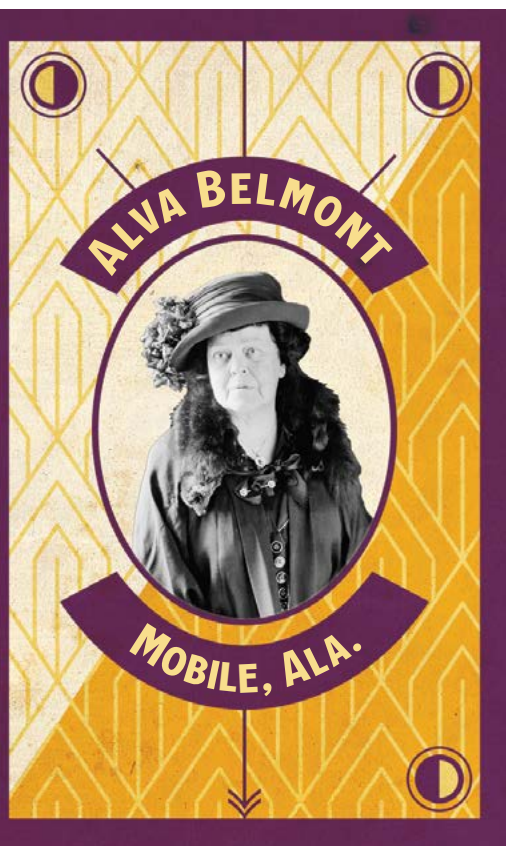
Reared as a Quaker, Alice Paul advocated militant tactics to achieve a federal suffrage amendment. In 1913, she and Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, later the National Woman's Party, and organized marches, protests and pickets. Paul was jailed for picketing the White House and organized a hunger strike in protest. In 1923, she drafted an equal rights amendment, which was introduced in Congress but never adopted.

FEB. 15, 1820 — MARCH 13, 1906

Susan B. Anthony, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, fought for women's rights for over five decades. Together, they traveled the country, gave speeches, published their writings, plotted strategy and, in 1869, founded the National Woman Suffrage Association to press for a suffrage amendment to the constitution. Anthony later helped merge the two largest suffrage organizations and led the new entity until 1900.

CIRCA 1797 — Nov. 26, 1883

Born into slavery, African American evangelist Sojourner Truth eventually gained her freedom and became a powerful advocate for abolition, temperance and women's rights. A charismatic itinerant preacher, Truth spoke out against the evils of slavery and by the 1850s also had taken up the cause of women's rights. In 1851, she delivered one of the most famous women's rights speeches in history, "Ain't I a Woman?" which confronted ideas about racial and gender inferiority.



WOMEN OF SUFFRAGE

SEPT. 23, 1863 — JULY 24, 1954

Mary Church Terrell fought for racial equality and women's suffrage — an educator, author and lecturer who used her position in the rising black middle class to combat discrimination. Terrell was an active member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and later co-founded and directed the National Association of Colored Women. In 1909, she became a charter member of the NAACP.

JULY 28, 1879 — DEC. 22, 1966

With Alice Paul, Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, helping reenergize the decades-long crusade for women's rights. In 1913, Burns and Paul organized a massive suffrage parade in the nation's capital, held the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration as president. Like Paul, she was arrested for picketing the White House and staged a hunger strike while in prison.

JAN. 17, 1853 — JAN. 26, 1933

Born in Alabama, Alva Belmont married into one of America's wealthiest and most socially prominent families, the Vanderbilts. Following a divorce and remarriage, Belmont became interested in women's rights and used her influence and financial resources to help Alice Paul and other militant suffragists. In 1921, she was elected president of the National Woman's Party. Belmont liked to offer listeners this advice: "Pray to God. She will help you."

SEPT. 24, 1825 — FEB. 22, 1911

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, along with Mary Church Terrell, helped organize the National Association of Colored Women in 1894. She also was a published poet and a powerful speaker and activist — she refused to give up her seat on a trolley car, 100 years before Rosa Parks did likewise. At a women's rights convention in 1866, Harper demanded equal rights for all, including black women: "You white women speak here of rights," she said. "I speak of wrongs."

JAN. 9, 1859 — MARCH 9, 1947

As president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), Carrie Chapman Catt masterminded the "Winning Plan," a massive drive that ensured passage of a constitutional amendment that secured women the right to vote. After the amendment was adopted in 1920, Catt reorganized NAWSA into the National League of Women Voters to educate women on political issues. She spent the rest of her life chiefly devoted to the international peace movement.

AUG. 13, 1818 — OCT. 18, 1893

Lucy Stone devoted most of her life to pioneering equality for women. She was the first woman in Massachusetts to earn a college degree. When Stone got married, she kept her own name as a protest against inequality. Stone lectured, wrote, organized conventions and campaigned for suffrage amendments in Kansas and New York. She later helped found the American Woman Suffrage Association and launched and edited the association's weekly publication, the *Woman's Journal*.



CELEBRATING SUFFRAGE

Cultural sites across D.C. mark the centennial of women's right to vote.

In the more than 70-year fight for women's voting rights, Washington was an epicenter of action. In 1913, thousands marched for women's suffrage, parading on Pennsylvania Avenue, with bands, mounted brigades and floats the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. Crowds of men jeered and blocked the route.

Still, it was a pivotal moment and an infusion of energy in the fight for women's suffrage that would finally be won in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

Now 100 years later, Washington is an epicenter for celebrating the centennial of women's suffrage with major exhibitions and programs across the city. Here are some of the must-see exhibits and tours:

- "Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote," a new exhibition at the Library of Congress through September 2020, draws from the collections of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Church Terrell and other suffragists and national suffrage organizations that changed America. Visitors can retrace the largest reform movement in American history through photos, film footage, artifacts and rare manuscripts.

- "Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence" is open at the National Portrait Gallery through Jan. 5, 2020. Visitors will learn about the radical women who fought slavery and pushed for suffrage through portraits, artifacts and biographies.

- "Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote," at the National Archives through Jan. 3, 2021, will feature more than 90 items centered on the 19th Amendment and the complex story of suffragists who secured voting rights.

- The Capitol Visitor Center will offer special guided tours exploring the stories, people and events that shaped the suffrage movement.

- The National Park Service conducts tours of the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument on Capitol Hill that has been at the center of the fight for women's rights as the National Woman's Party headquarters.

- "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith" at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History features Susan B. Anthony's shawl, a suffrage wagon and the table on which Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted the Declaration of Sentiments for the Seneca Falls convention.

—Brett Zongker is a public affairs specialist in the Office of Communications.

■ Marchers pose in front of the U.S. Capitol during the historic suffrage parade through Washington, D.C., on March 3, 1913. Prints and Photographs Division

MORE INFORMATION

D.C.-area suffrage events
[Washington.org/Suffrage](https://www.washington.org/suffrage)

AROUND THE LIBRARY



1.



2.

1. Rep. Brenda Lawrence (left) and Sen. Marsha Blackburn participate in a special opening program for the Library's new exhibition, "Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote," on June 4.

2. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi offers remarks during the June 4 opening program for the Library's new suffrage exhibition.



3.



4.

3. Susan Billington Harper speaks at a May 8 memorial service in the Coolidge Auditorium for her father, former Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, who passed away in November 2018.

4. Singaporean American novelist Kevin Kwan (left) discusses his books with the Library's chief communications officer, Roswell Encina, on May 22 in the Coolidge Auditorium.



5.



6.

5. Opera star Jessye Norman appears onstage in the Coolidge Auditorium on May 16 to discuss her life and career and to announce the donation of her papers to the Library.

6. On June 3, visitors explore a special collections display commemorating the bicentennial of poet Walt Whitman's birth.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHAWN MILLER

Library Acquires O'Keeffe, Stieglitz Letters

The Library recently acquired a trove of letters from artist Georgia O'Keeffe and her husband, photographer and art promoter Alfred Stieglitz, that shed new light on art history.

The collection consists mostly of handwritten letters dating from 1929 to 1947, totaling 157 items. O'Keeffe and Stieglitz wrote the letters separately to filmmaker Henwar Rodakiewicz, their friend and colleague.

The letters were preserved in private hands for decades, never seen by the public. The Library is making them available to the public for the first time.

O'Keeffe's letters make up the bulk of the materials. She writes in her distinctive calligraphy, penning notes from trains, her New York City apartment, the Stieglitz property at Lake George in New York and Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, where she kept a home and studio.

MORE: loc.gov/item/prn-19-032

Dale Appointed Head of Library Services

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden in April appointed Robin L. Dale to the position of associate librarian for Library Services.

As head of Library Services, Dale oversees efforts to develop the universal collections at the Library and to organize, provide access to, maintain, secure and preserve those collections.

Dale previously worked as deputy director of the Office of Library Services at the Institute of Museum and Library Services. She also served as the senior director for digital services at LYRASIS, where she developed and implemented organizational strategy for digital programs, services, grant funding and partnerships.

She holds a master's degree in library and information science from the University of California, Berkeley, and received a Bachelor of Arts cum laude from the University of California, Riverside.

MORE: loc.gov/item/prn-19-026

AAPB to Preserve Decades of 'Sesame Street'

The American Archive of Public Broadcasting (AAPB), a collaboration between the Library and the WGBH Educational Foundation, announced the donation by Sesame Workshop of digitized episodes of "Sesame Street" to be preserved for posterity.

Nearly 4,500 episodes from the first 49 seasons of the iconic children's television program will be incorporated into the extensive AAPB archive of public media from across the United States.

Among the indelible scenes preserved in the collection are "Farewell, Mr. Hooper," in which Big Bird learns to cope with death; Ernie's "Rubber Duckie, You're the One," which made it to No. 16 on the Billboard singles chart in 1970; Cookie Monster's turn as "Alistair Cookie," the cookie and classics-obsessed host of Monsterpiece Theater; and Kermit the Frog's "It's Not Easy Being Green," a tune promoting self-acceptance.

MORE: loc.gov/item/prn-19-019

CRS' Jefferson Elected to Lead American Library Association

Julius C. Jefferson Jr., a section head in the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division of the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress, recently was elected president-elect of the American Library Association (ALA).

He will serve as president-elect for one year before stepping into the role of president at the 2020 ALA annual conference in Chicago.

"It is an immense honor to be elected 2020-21 president of the American Library Association," Jefferson said. "I am both humbled and appreciative of the confidence in my ability to lead ALA in the service of libraries and library workers."

Jefferson holds a bachelor's degree in history from Howard University and a master's in library and information science from the University of Maryland. He joined the Congressional Research Service in 2006.

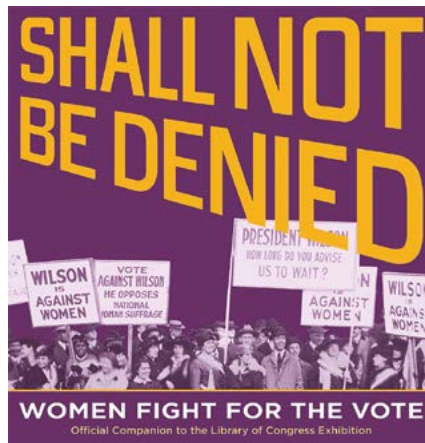
MORE: <https://bit.ly/2DkTPB8>

SHOP



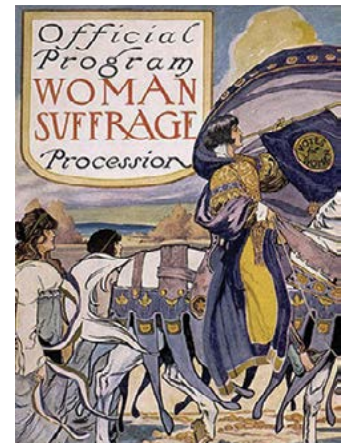
19th Amendment Tote
Product #21301596
Price: \$20

Pay tribute to suffragists who fought for the right to vote with this tote bearing names of the movement's key figures.



'Shall Not Be Denied'
Product #21107172
Price: \$24.95

This companion volume to the Library exhibition of the same name tells the story of the long campaign for women's suffrage.



Suffrage Journal
Product #21408838
Price: \$16

This journal bears an image from the official program of the suffrage march held in Washington, D.C., in 1913.



Votes for Women Puzzle
Product #21504384
Price: \$20

This 500-piece puzzle celebrates women – and one man, Frederick Douglass – important in the suffrage movement.



Shall Not Be Denied Pin
Product #21509805
Price: \$11.95

Honor the sacrifices of the suffragists by wearing this purple, white and gold pin – the chosen colors of the U.S. movement.



19th Amendment Scarf
Product #21302940
Price: \$55

This scarf emblazoned with the text of the 19th Amendment is sure to inspire your day.

■ Order online: loc.gov/shop ■ Order by phone: 888.682.3557



EXHIBITIONS FOR ALL

Generous donors help make Library exhibits like ‘Shall Not Be Denied’ possible.

Library of Congress exhibitions come to life, in part, thanks to donors who help cultivate a nation of learners.

Exhibitions and their related programs are one way the Library engages, with an ever-growing audience of nearly 2 million visitors to its Capitol Hill campus each year and millions more online. The in-person and online exhibition experiences inspire exploration and discovery, connecting the American people with the Library’s history, collections, research centers and experts.

The Library’s newest exhibition, “Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote,” is made possible through major support from the James Madison Council, the Library’s private-sector support group. The Madison Council has given more than \$230 million to the Library since its inception, including funding for more than 40 exhibitions and programs. Madison Council members Thomas V. Girardi and Roger and Julie Baskes generously provided additional support for the “Shall Not Be Denied” exhibition.

Supporters like Democracy Fund and AARP

not only inspire visitors through their support of exhibitions like “Shall Not Be Denied” but also have contributed to signature initiatives like the Library of Congress National Book Festival.

In addition to its support for “Shall Not Be Denied,” HISTORY also will distribute a companion “idea book” that features ideas for classroom activities using primary sources. HISTORY also created idea books for the landmark exhibitions exploring the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and World War I. First time supporters 1st Financial Bank USA and the Barbara Lee Family Foundation Fund at the Boston Foundation join this philanthropic group, which seeks to inspire and engage lifelong learners from around the world.

If a Library of Congress exhibition inspires you, consider supporting one of its exhibitions highlighting unique collections, such as the upcoming “Rosa Parks: In Her Own Words” exhibition, which will feature Parks’ personal correspondence and family photographs, letters from presidents and more.

Every gift makes a difference and helps the Library share its unparalleled resources with the nation and the world.

■ A visitor examines items in the Library’s new exhibition, “Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote.”
Shawn Miller

MORE INFORMATION

Make a gift
loc.gov/donate

Library of Congress exhibitions
loc.gov/exhibits

LAST WORD

SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI

One hundred and seventy-one years ago, 300 women and men gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, and shook the world with a simple proclamation: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men and women are created equal.” With those words, the women of Seneca Falls ignited a relentless, generations-long struggle by America’s women to secure what is rightfully ours: the sacred right to vote.

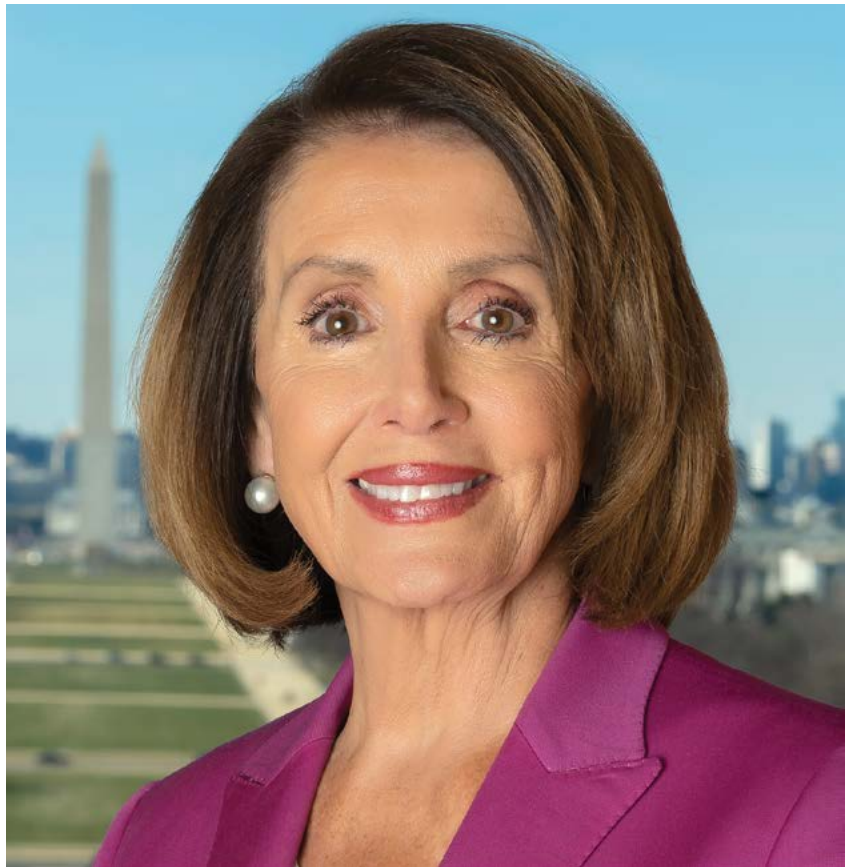
Yet, for more than 70 years after, the full promise of equality would be denied to America’s women. During that time, women did not wait for change – they demanded change. For decades, in the face of overwhelming challenges, courageous women protested and picketed, marched and mobilized, were beaten and jailed and finally won the right to vote.

The first woman elected to Congress in 1916, Jeannette Rankin of Montana, led the fight to pass the 19th Amendment, asking, “How shall we explain the meaning of democracy if the same Congress that voted for war to make the world safe for democracy refuses to give this small measure of democracy to the women of our country?” It would be another two years before the 19th Amendment was finally ratified, but Rankin and countless other suffragists never wavered in their fierce determination to secure the right to vote.

When the amendment was ratified, headlines described this milestone as women being “given” the right to vote. Nothing was given; women fought for their rights.

Generations after women won the right to vote, we would have to fight for another right: the right to take our seat at the decision-making table. When I came to Congress, there were only 25 women in Congress. Back then, women weren’t considered a threat to the established, male-dominated power in Washington. Yet, we refused to sit on the sidelines. We knew our purpose and we knew our power – and we used it to make progress, demanding not only a seat at the table, but a seat at the head of the table.

Today, how incredible it is that, in the same Congress that will mark 100 years since women won the right to vote, we serve with more than 100 women members – and, of course, with a woman Speaker!



Our women members made history – and now, they are making a difference. Just like the suffragists of the past, these women are fighting to ensure that every freedom, every liberty and every right belongs to every American – including the right to be heard at the ballot box, which is the mainstay of our democracy. The suffragists’ noble cause continues in our fight against blatantly partisan, morally wrong voter suppression efforts that target communities of color.

As we prepare to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, we must channel the same pioneering spirit of the suffragists and rededicate ourselves to the important work left to be done to bring our nation closer to its founding promise of full fairness and equality.

The Library of Congress’ exhibition, “Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote,” plays an important role in this mission. This special initiative not only celebrates the suffragists of the past, it informs and inspires the change-makers of our future. It is my hope that all who experience this exhibition will be empowered to stand on the suffragists’ shoulders, to speak out and make their voices for change heard, particularly young women and girls. As we say: When women succeed, America succeeds!

–Nancy Pelosi is Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.



■ Visitors explore the "Shall Not Be Denied" exhibition following an opening celebration on June 4.
Shawn Miller

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DENIED: WOMEN
FIGHT FOR THE VOTE**
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ART IN ACTION
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